

Library

JOLIET JUNIOR COLLEGE
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
MR. GLEN STITELY

R
977.32
S862o

For Reference

Not to be taken from this room



R
977.32
S 8620

JOLIET JUNIOR COLLEGE

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEWEE AGREEMENT

This manuscript numbering ³⁰ pages is a transcript of one or more tape-recorded interviews with me. Any reader should bear in mind that he is reading a transcript of my spoken rather than my written word.

It is understood that the Joliet Junior College Learning Resource Center will allow others to read and utilize this manuscript and/or the tapes from time to time in connection with the educational purposes of the College and in accordance with the usual standards of the Learning Resource Center.

I hereby give and grant to Joliet Junior College as a donation for such scholarly and educational purposes as the College shall determine the full use of this information.

Understood and agreed to

Interviewers

Alec Kesich

(signature)

(signature)

(signature)

3-12-75

(date)

Interviewee

Glen C. Stealey

(signature)

210 Park Dr

(address)

Joliet, Ill. 60436

(city & state)

3-12-75

(date)

This manuscript is hereby made available for research in accordance with the conditions set forth in the Interviewee Agreement. All literary rights in the manuscript, including the right to publications, are reserved to Joliet Junior College. Persons wishing to quote any part of this manuscript must obtain written permission from the Director of the College Learning Resource Center.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Birthplace and Schooling -----	5
Service in World War I -----	7
Depression -----	8
From Retail Clothing to Furniture -----	10
Entertainment -----	11
Track Elevation -----	13
Prices and Fashions -----	14
Joliet Area Roads -----	16
Airfields, Planes, and Flying -----	16
Automobiles of Yesteryear -----	18
Industries -----	19
Department Stores and Hotels -----	21
Senior Citizens -----	23
Political Action Groups -----	24
Politics and Elections -----	25
Traffic Problems -----	27
School Drop-Outs -----	28



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2020 with funding from
Joliet Junior College Library

<https://archive.org/details/stitelyglen00joli>

INTERVIEWEE: Glen C. Stitely

INTERVIEWER: Alec Kesich

KESICH: This is an interview with Glen C. Stitely for the Joliet Junior College Oral History Program by Alec Kesich at 210 Park Drive, Joliet, Illinois on the 12th of March, 1975, at 2:00 p.m.

KESICH: Well, Mr. Stitely, where you born?

STITELY: I was born in Mount Carroll, Illinois. It's a small town about, oh, 150 miles west -- out near Dixon and Freeport. My folks came to Joliet in 1900, when I was six years old. So I had my schooling here and joined the service in 1917 and returned to this area in '20, but spent the next twenty years in Hammond and returned to Joliet in 1940. So the past thirty-five years I've been pretty much in touch with the events, and there's been lots of changes.

KESICH: When you went to school here. . . what. . . you came here at six, right?

STITELY: I went to school here -- up to, and including, three years of high school; and then I joined the service.

KESICH: What school did you go to?

STITELY: Eastern Avenue School -- at that time it was Eastern Avenue; it's the F. E. Marsh now. They had what they called Central School for seventh and eighth grade. Joliet Central -- they didn't have East or West in those days -- it was just J. T. for any and all.

KESICH: What were the schools like? Were they one classroom?

STITELY: No, each grade had a separate teacher and a separate class. . . pretty much each grade had a separate unit. There's been a lot of changes scholastically I imagine since then, but at that time each school had a separate grade.

KESICH: Was there much trouble in the schools?

STITELY: Not so much -- things were pretty much under control of a principal at that time.

KESICH: There's always your "goof-offs" and "pranksters."

STITELY: Yes, pretty much under control. There was very little controversy at any time. That's something that more or less developed in recent years on the various campuses; but in those days things were very, very quiet and very, very peaceful.

KESICH: When you went into seventh and eighth grade in junior high, did you. . . like now, the kids change classes; they have different classes.

STITELY: We had to change schools -- where Eastern Avenue was up to the seventh, we had to go downtown to Central, which was eliminated eventually. They even tore the school; and, incidentally, that school is where Woolworth is now, at the corner of Webster and Chicago.

KESICH: I mean did you have to stay in one class for the whole day, or did you just change rooms?

STITELY: One class for the full day at all times and all grades.

KESICH: Same teachers?

STITELY: Even Central School for seventh and eighth grades was a one-

room, one-class deal.

KESICH: How old were you when you left school?

STITELY: That was in 1911. . . Oh, I would say about '11, I think; yes -- it would have to be in the neighborhood of '11. From then until 1917 I was in the confectionery business in the old Grand Theater Building.

KESICH: And you went into the army, right?

STITELY: Yes, I went into the service; and I was in the service for about three -- a little better than three years.

KESICH: What branch of the service were you in?

STITELY: Infantry. Sixth Infantry, and at that time was the 5th Division. It was originally a Texas outfit. My service took me through a short period in Texas, and then to Chattanooga, Tennessee and the old Fort Oglethorpe area. Then, when we returned, I had signed up overseas for an additional year for convenience . . . what they called then "convenience" of the government. It kept me in just a few months longer than I normally would have if I hadn't of signed up. There was a little advantage -- I got five cents a mile travel pay from X-Luxemburg to point of enlistment, plus bonus and one thing or another. When we returned to the states, I was stationed at Camp Gordon, Atlanta. It was a real nice camp -- I enjoyed Atlanta, Georgia. I returned home then in 1920 from the service and started in retail business; although prior to that, as a youngster, I had sold shoes and worked in the store after school and on Saturdays. So retail selling has been my whole life, more or less;

but I gradually got into furniture the last fifteen years, and I enjoyed that very, very much.

KESICH: When you came back from the army, what business exactly did you start into?

STITELY: I started in the retail business. First it was shoes -- I had sold shoes previously. Then, when I returned from the service, I was with Marshall Field in Chicago for two or three years and eventually got out to Hammond, Indiana in the retail clothing. I enjoyed it no end; and that was the story for the next, oh, I'd say the next twenty years, anyway. The last fifteen has been in furniture.

KESICH: Right after that, the depression came, right? . . . pretty soon after that the depression came?

STITELY: Yes.

KESICH: Where were you at that time?

STITELY: At Hammond, Indiana. Unfortunately, during the depression I was in the tailoring business, made-to-measure. It was a new organization, and they weathered the storm for a few years but eventually folded. During that time I aligned myself for the large retail organization; and the depression didn't phase me too greatly, Alec. I was married in 1923; and my first son was born in 1926, the second in 1929. Then the depression started from then on; and, as I say, I was employed -- not making a great deal of money, but it didn't take so much in those days.

KESICH: You didn't go hungry?

STITELY: We were quite fortunate to have employment and income at all times throughout the entire depression. Selling was a good business, and there was always opportunities available.

KESICH: Were prices really . . . you know -- low?

STITELY: Quite low and quite modest. There was a general trend from then on. I was with an organization that was experimenting in those days in time pay. You probably won't remember, but in those days you either had to have a 30-day charge or cash. The buyer on credit was out of luck. They were experimenting then with a ten-pay plan over two or three months, and that's how time buying came into existence. It proved out very successful, because many days you may not do a lot of fresh business; but you had a lot of payments coming in from business that you had done previously. It was interesting, but that was the beginning of the time-pay situation. They called it a ten-pay plan, more or less over a two- or three-month period; and the prices naturally started to pyramid a little bit and took a gradual change.

KESICH: Were there any crooked politics that you remember?

STITELY: I couldn't put my finger on any particular case, Alec; but my contention has always been that there's been a little "hanky-panky" in politics at all levels -- more or less in a mild manner. For instance, in Washington there's always been lobbyists there. Some influential congressmen and senators have always been receptive of little gifts or something under the table. Even in state politics it got to be big, as you no doubt know; he created jobs. It's the age-old story, but there has always been a question in my mind -- I'm sure I would have made the world's worst politician.

KESICH: Let's see, this came about now around the Second World War, didn't it?

STITELY: Yes. Along -- when was that, in '40?

KESICH: About '40.

STITELY: About '40, and I was at Goldblatt's here about that time in the retail end of clothing. Up until 1957 or '58 I commenced to get a little involved in furniture and enjoyed a few years of it with Goldblatt's. Then, when Polk's came to town, I had an opportunity to get in on the main floor -- and I had an opportunity to join up. I was well received because the people that had sold to Polk's I knew quite well. I enjoyed the last fifteen years of furniture selling at Polk's. It was very, very interesting -- it was a big-ticket number and something different to me; but I always prouder myself on being a pretty fair salesman regardless of what you're selling. So it was a little better financial deal for me, because we worked on commission; and furniture and carpet was big-ticket articles. It was just as easy to sell 700 or \$800 worth of furniture or carpet as it would be 50 or \$75 worth of clothing. So it was quite an advantage to get into the furniture business. Then I stayed until -- oh, this will be my third year of retirement. So I worked, really, longer than the average do; because it not only was a good financial deal for me, I enjoyed it. My health was good and no hobbies -- so I stayed on just a little longer than they do normally now. It seems when they get 60-65, they start thinking about retirement. I think, mainly, it's just that they are fed up with the job that they're on and want a change. They'll quit that one, but take on another part-time, or shift around a little bit. They just don't fold up and retire entirely, because many of them

are too young for that. But I think that it's just that they've been twenty to twenty-five years with an outfit -- the routine gets a little tiresome; and they can't wait until they make a change. That's the main setup, I think; although with me it was a little bit on the health situation. I'd had a little warning on dizziness, unbalance condition; I was commencing to fight it a little bit so I decided it would be better to relax and take it a little easy.

KESICH: How old are you now?

STITELY: I am eighty.

KESICH: You are eighty years old now!

STITELY: Eighty, the 16th of last September. My wife is seventy-two; there is eight years difference. We have enjoyed normal health for senior citizens. We have a lot to be thankful for, I am sure.

KESICH: What did you used to do for entertainment?

STITELY: We hobnobbed with a few couples a little younger than we are, like sixty or sixty-five. We have pretty much the same likings. The Benos are very good friends of ours; he was with the mill and just retired last January. We went to Florida and hobnobbed for a couple of weeks. We had each driven down a different period; they wanted to take in Disneyland, so they went to Orlando and commuted back and forth from about twenty-five miles out. Things are pretty rough in Orlando; there wasn't a room to be had. If there was, they were terribly expensive. So they stayed on, and we came on home. We have enjoyed summer vacations, winter vacations; one summer, in fact several summers, we went up to Door County, Wisconsin with another neighbor who has recently passed away. Then we

took a trip around the lake up through Michigan, back through Wisconsin. My wife has a brother up in Decatur, Michigan; that's about 150 miles. She has several sisters and brothers in Hammond, Indiana, which is 40 miles away. Truthfully, we get out and visit the shopping districts. Occasionally, we will take in a show in Chicago, one of those dinner and show arrangements. I don't do any night driving or prowling around much -- mostly daytime. If we do go nights, my friend Andy Beno does most of the driving. We confine our activities mostly to the daytime.

KESICH: Do you remember anything about Electric Park?

STITELY: Electric Park -- yes. That comes back to my mind. I might mention also Dellwood Park. Dellwood was up adjacent to Lockport. Electric Park was at Plainfield. They had a big dance pavillion. I think it was run by the streetcar company, if I am not mistaken; they owned Dellwood Park. They built a beautiful, big, circle dance hall; and a local orchestra, Howard Sweet's Orchestra, played up there. It was very successful for a long, long while. In fact, it was our main entertainment in those days. We didn't have too many concerts; it had to be a dance in the surrounding community or out at Dellwood. Then Plainfield took over, and Electric Park was pretty popular for a short period of time. I don't remember Electric Park as well as I do Dellwood Park, because I enjoyed dancing; in fact, if there wasn't a dance at home, we would go twenty, thirty, forty miles to get to one. As I said, that was the main form of entertainment in my younger days. But I think Electric Park eventually developed into a roller skating rink. Did they have roller skating! Then we had a roller skating rink locally. There was a lot of changes locally in the theaters. In my early days I

was lined up with Reuben's who were operating several theaters in this area. One of them was the Crystal Stairs. They had water flowing down glass stairs. They had along with movies a singer Eddie Cavanaugh. I noticed a recent piece in the paper where he has just passed away. Fanny Bertagnoli, she was the pianist; and Eddie Cavanaugh was the singer. They eventually married. The water flowing down these stairs was quite a bit of amusement at that time. Then eventually they built the Rialto, and there used to be a Joliet theatre for regular stage plays where Walgreen's are now, right on the corner, the old Joliet Theatre. Then when that closed up, it developed into a roller skating rink upstairs; but again, that changed and was torn down. Neisner's store moved in, and then Walgreen's took over that. So there's been a lot of changes -- then Penney's and Sears' moved on the north end, and Woolworth; and, of course, we can't overlook the past growth of West Jefferson Street -- that's one of the most remarkable things, because in my early days, that was a few blocks up the hill here; and that was all prairie. Then eventually -- in fact, it was so rapid, it was amazing. Then the automobile rows started and along with that many different stores and manufacturers. It just got a general shake-up and a lot of notoriety.

KESICH: Do you remember any fires in Joliet -- extra big fires in Joliet?

STITELEY: Yes, I'm trying to think, namely, of some of the big fires -- of course, the most recent one was the restaurant at the corner of Ottawa. Then they had a fire on the opposite corner in the Dorsey Building. I just can't bring to mind too many of the big ones -- and then, of course, something else we might comment a little on is the old railroads cutting up the town and eventually going to track elevation. The remodeling of

buildings and some of the high rises start moving in. That's about the . . . I just can't bring to mind too much about the fires. Of course, then when the streetcars were a fixture here, that was a big item. Of course, when they left, there was a general reorganization of buildings and different localities. Churches -- I know the Ottawa Street Church, of which I am a member, used to be down at the corner of Clinton and Ottawa; and the parsonage is where the church is now. So they racked that up and built an office building and a hotel there, and built the church down where the parsonage is; and the parsonage is now moved up on the west side.

KESICH: What did prices used to be like when you'd go into -- what is it, the Silver Staircase?

STITELEY: Well, prices were amazing. Back when we returned to Joliet in the '40s, prices were very reasonable. As I can recall, butter . . . there was a Lincoln Bakery down around Bluff Street -- a very, very popular market and grocery. We lived on Broadway, right around the corner, so we did a lot of shopping at the Lincoln Bakery. I can remember that butter was 25¢, 30¢, 35¢ a pound. I mean that was the beginning -- meat was very, very reasonable. I just can't realize that we've come so far in such a short period of time. For instance, suits were \$25, \$30, \$35 -- now it isn't anything unusual \$100, \$125, \$150 -- you'll many times see a \$200 suit, or \$250. It's just completely out of range, and my thought is -- how are they ever going to get back to a normal situation? I suppose, in my particular instance, I give it more thought because we're on a fixed income. It possibly would be a little

more hardship to the worker who's advancing. It isn't so serious. There's been lots of items on the senior citizen who's on a fixed income, and it's probably more amazing to him than to the average worker who's gone along with current conditions and making big salaries.

KESICH: What were trends in clothing -- do you remember any really drastic changes?

STITELEY: Yes, they were very modest. Surprising again, how they got to the brighter colors, and how the styles changed from the narrow lapels just practically overnight. I remember spending a pretty sizeable amount for a suit of clothes, and the egg wasn't hardly dry; and I had ordered a narrow lapel until they branched into the wider lapel and the bigger bottoms, slash pockets and gayer colors. I was happy -- I thought that men's wear was much too somber for, oh -- many, many, many years. Conservatively small collars -- of course, I watched the trend from the neck band and the separate collar, onto the collar attached. I experienced all phases of that situation; but I was happy to see the trend in men's wear brighten up and get a little gayer, because I always thought they were entirely too somber. Well, women's wear is the same, too -- they started a trend whereby they went to the extreme both ways, with both men's and women's wear.

KESICH: Did, for instance, women's skirts -- did they go up and down?

STITELEY: No, women's skirts were always pretty conservative; then all of a sudden they started a shorter trend, and they've never changed from that. Women's wear and slack suits in women's wear, possibly, is the biggest changeover, where previous to that a woman was never seen in

slacks unless it was for home use or garden use, or something of that nature. But now they wear them for any and all formal wear -- they wear them for any and all occasions. It got to be a big, big deal. Of course, there's still a few conservative women that just don't feel comfortable in slacks; but I'd say 85 or 90% of them now use them for most any or all purposes.

KESICH: The roads around here in through Joliet -- how did they change?

STITELEY: Joliet has never progressed quite like I would have enjoyed seeing them. I mean we've got a lot of communities with no curbing, and that's a might cheap. Of course, the newer sections the zoning required -- but many times there's no sidewalks. A lot of areas you'll see a Nod-N-Prod instance of where there's no sidewalks and no curbing. For instance, our street here -- at the county line through here -- we've got a nice, wide street; but we don't have any curbing. It always created a little hazard, I think -- most of the new towns and newer sections, naturally. At one time, we didn't have the wider highways and a lot of country roads. Oh, things have come a long ways, Alec.

KESICH: How did flying and that sort of thing come about?

STITELEY: That has naturally become a big business. I was never too much interested in electronics, so I can't give you too much information along those lines. Airfields were a rarity, don't you know. Now most any town of 70-, 80-, or 100,000 has a pretty modern airfield. That, like everything else, progressed. I have a brother-in-law who's done a lot of flying. In fact, during the war he delivered planes from the

base to the interior. He was an outstanding pilot, and then after the war he did a lot of teaching up until just very recently, He doesn't do too much now because he's in his 70's, but he's still very bright and very brilliant behind the throttle. He does a nice job of flying. I know he has a few doctors and dentists over around Hammond and Lansing that take instructions -- he's very thorough. He doesn't do as much of that as he did previously. Flying had become big business. Then I know from my son's experience -- Jack, with his two blind youngsters -- they've had to make a lot of trips to Boston -- Kimmie, particularly, when her retinas went bad. They had a big retina institution in Boston where they -- oh, they come from all over the world. He's done a lot of flying and made numerous trips -- many trips, too. Then, too, he's been a little successful; and he does quite a bit of flying on his vacation. He just came off from a recent trip to Florida. He went down for about 10 days -- flew down and flew back and picked up a car for rental purpose while he was there. With him, time is an element -- rather than take three or four days driving, he's down in a couple of hours, because he never has over 10, 12, 14 days at any one time that he can get away from the business.

KESICH: Were you ever in a plane yourself?

STITELEY: Yes, I have but never did any commercial flying. We went up a few times with a brother-in-law over in Hammond, and that's been the extent of my flying. I have often threatened that I would, and I've never had any great fear; and the same token, I've never had any desire (laughter) or love to. It happened in my later years; and I got a little

chicken, I guess. (Laughter) That's about the size of it.

KESICH: Take, for instance, car styles. What's the first car that you remember that came out?

STITELEY: Oh, that would be a little hard to state, because I've come through so many phases -- from the old Ford Essex and Hupmobile and Studebaker, Imperial and Packard -- I mean a lot of those old ones that have gone by the roadside -- but the styling, too . . . It just would be hard to elaborate or try to pinpoint the years, don't you know; but there's been so many changes each and every year. Even now, when you see some of these older style cars -- some of them with the wings that are still on, you know, you know that they're an early vintage. But there hasn't been too much change in the last few years -- I meant in styling. Really there hasn't been . . . After they once got them shaped up and in pretty good style, there hasn't been too much change in the past -- like five or ten years like there was previously. It just seems like they were a long while getting up to a current level, but it was interesting to kind of go back and reminisce over the older styles and smaller motors. Now so many high-powered cars and geared up for fast . . . in fact, I think maybe too much so for their own good.

KESICH: You know the bridges in Joliet going across the canal? Were they always there, or were there bridges before that -- do you remember?

STITELEY: The bridges -- as far as I can remember, but they have been . . . You see, I was away for twenty years, and things have kinda gotten . . . because as far as I can remember, the bridges have been . . . but I think they've improved them; and I know the ones up at Lockport have been improved

(like 16th Street and 9th Street). There's been some talk of lowering the river or heightening the bridges to eliminate the delay. I had a little experience two ways -- in Hammond it was railroads -- they cut up the town miserably. They had no track elevation -- they talked about it for a long while; but during my twenty years over there you have no idea of the time you can spend waiting for trains. Where in comparison, I think I would much rather wait for a boat than wait for a train, because after track elevation -- I can remember that very distinctly -- I worked on the . . . As a kid I worked a little extra on the Union Station here. I can remember that faintly -- I just don't recall the year. After track elevation there wasn't too much delay for boats -- once in a while now the traffic will get ganged up, but I think they have them pretty well regulated whereby they confine their run to more certain times in the morning or afternoon as much as possible to eliminate. There's been a lot of talk about lowering the water or raising the bridges, but it probably was run into a staggering fee; and they're not giving it too much thought, I'm sure.

KESICH: What are some of the boats you remembered on the canal?

STITELEY: No, I don't remember. I know they have recently turned it over to the city. There was one that was here locally. But I just . . . I can recall when we were on Broadway and I walked back and forth. I can recall always being intrigued with the boats as they went through and watching the workmen. But namely I can't come up with anything very exciting. It's big business . . . it's really big, really big business.

KESICH: When you were a child, what was the big industry?

STITELEY: The main industries were the mills and the E.J.&E Railroad.

They were the main sources of employment, as I recall it; and then my dad was connected with the coke plant which was a subsidiary of the steel mill. It was operated by the Illinois Steel Mill that eventually folded up because they had a bigger plant at Gary. This was running at a loss so it was outmoded. Then there was a trend for wallpaper plants. There was seven or eight of them at one time. Seems when one starts, the others follow. Just overhandedly, Joliet became pretty popular industrially-wise along the canal. In other various areas like the Electra, the Arsenal, that got big business, too, as you recall. Edison had plants here. It just eventually became very popular because it was excessible for boats as well as railroads; it had an advantage. It has never ceased. They have added right up to the present time; I mean they have gone along and added various industrial and manufacturing plants right up to the present time, even several new ones. But I think the Arsenal was a big boost. I was out there, too; I stopped my retail business, and my wife and I both went out to the Arsenal. Our first stint was in 1942 till 1945 and then again from 1950 to 1954. Both times I went right back into the retail business; but it had slowed up a little, and I saw an opportunity to improve myself so I went both times as an inspector -- first time as a company inspector, the second time as a government inspector. It was something a little different; it was enjoyable. I was kind of glad to see it rack up; I mean making ammunition, that can only mean one thing. Wars are not good for anybody.

KESICH: In the retail business, do you remember any revolutionary ideas that came up?

STITELEY: No, not particularly. Although, there has been a lot of changes in the retail business. I am a little amazed here recently to see a couple

of the big chains racking up, like Grant's, you recall, down on the corner of Clinton Street. I think W. T. Grant's, that's an old organization; but they were hitting a little dull spot. One of the more successful I think has been this K-Mart. They're blossoming out all over the entire United States and enjoying a lot of prosperity where as you know they were kicking Topp's around. I think the trouble with some of those discount stores is poor management, more or less. They get a little hungry, and it is poor management. They grab different types of business they are not too familiar with; sometimes they don't do a successful job.

KESICH: When you were young, what was some of the big department stores in Joliet?

STITELEY: Some that have gone by the roadside were Block & Kuhl, Carson-Pirie, and Lytton's; they have come and gone. Then there was Ducker's; for many years it was a very successful downtown store. They were where Grant's were. Then the Boston Store, another phase; they were across from the courthouse for many years, and then eventually went out to the west side. Along with that there were many chains of office buildings like the Emco; now they are remodeling that old Boston Store. They are tearing down buildings and making parking lots. The banks have all advanced with their drive-ins and parking lots. There used to be an old Orpheum Theater where the National is now down at Webster. There was a big theater on that corner. There was an A & P and some apartments, and then it burnt out. They tore it down, and National took it over and put in several drive-ins. Where the White Store is used to be a big overall factory. They were known nationally over the country; they were called the Sweet Ore. That's before your time and wouldn't mean to much to you.

But they were a national institution and shipped overalls all over the country and possibly all over the world. They were a big outfit. Just don't know how those changes came about could have been in the twenty years that I was over at Hammond. There has been a lot of changes. Hotels also. . . we had several real nice hotels, but they seem to have become a thing of the past. They had a lovely Woodruff Hotel, and we had a Louie Joliet Hotel that's become a retirement home. They tore the Woodruff down and put in a parking lot. Many years ago right on Chicago Street there used to be a big hotel called The Duncan. Then when track elevation came about, that came down. But over the years hotels just sort of more or less lose their flavor and cease to exist. It became motel-minded, more or less. That's one phase of the situation. The changes are almost too numerous to mention. You could possibly hit on any phase; you can always think of different things, but I think we have covered quite a few of them.

KESICH: You know the stores you mentioned. . . were they department stores with general. . .

STITELY: Yes, they were big, local department stores. Since that, Penney's has come to town; Sears has enlarged; Montgomery Ward's used to be over on Ottawa Street; they were out for a season or two while they were building the new store out on West Jefferson Street. But most of them were local like Block and Kuhl's, and Ducker's, I remember particularly, and the Boston Store. The Boston Store was operated by a family by the name of Felman. Oh, for many years -- I can remember when I was a little youngster, first came to town, and my folks took me into the Boston Store and bought me my first suits. I can remember that like it was

yesterday, and that was a few years ago. But outside of that department stores, likewise, have kinda taken a trend for outlying shopping areas. It looks like we've got more of those to come.

KESICH: Can you think of anything else?

STITELY: Um. . . I'm trying to think. . . I think we've covered the trend in hotels and motels and shopping districts; and oh -- of course, there's senior citizens, too. That's another phase that we haven't touched on, because years ago he was more or less a forgotten member. I can remember when there wasn't nearly so much attention or reference paid to senior citizens as there are now, fortunately, because I'm one of them. Now we are quite fortunate, because I know a lot of areas that do not have as many high-rise or senior-citizen homes, which I think is a big deal. It permits the senior citizens to be a little independent now -- where otherwise, he went with a son or went with a daughter. It's just a general improvement, I think, for senior citizens. Then again they've made a lot of low-rental properties which are a big item for the poor class of people. Everybody doesn't make \$15- or \$20,000 a year -- they've got to have rental in proportion to their income. The government has been a big help, where they say years ago they paid little or no attention to the poor people and the senior citizens. So that's another deal that's been very encouraging, and they seem to be drumming away at it. I belong to an A. A. R. P., which is strictly an elderly association -- it's retired teachers and retired people over fifty-five. They have about six million members, and that's a big deal. I mean they lobby in Washington and do a lot of good.

KESICH: They never had that when you were younger though.

STITELY: Yes, they do a lot of good in Washington by getting legislations started and working with senators and congressmen on bills that they want to promote. No, I think that a lot of our success is due to the fact that they are so big and so strong that they just have to pay attention to them.

KESICH: When you were young, where was the poorest district in Joliet?

STITELY: Well, the poorer districts were on the extreme outskirts. Now I can remember Brooklyn was on the extreme southeast corner, and it seems like the south end here have been more of less of the less progressive -- let's put it that way. Although the colored folks have kinda come into their own, at one time they were exclusive on South Chicago Street and Patterson Road. Now they've spread around Eastern Avenue, and there's various districts that have been opened up for the colored folks; and they're enjoying a little more prosperity than they used to years ago. The east side was always. . . in fact the entire east side was always -- there was kind of a division. The west side was a little more aristocratic, and the east side was for the poorer or middle classes.

KESICH: On the news the other day I saw this article by this one guy, and he said that there's a big Ku Klux Klan movement in Aurora. Do you ever remember any of that being around here?

STITELY: I'm wondering about that. I never was very closely. . . Every once in a while there'll be a new item and a little flare-up. No doubt there was such an organization, because I've seen a lot of pictures of various meetings; but I think it was particularly in the south. It was a big movement in the south, because during my army career -- I meant

in Georgia, Alabama and different places like that. I think that they were more or less active in the southern states more than they were in the northern. Every once in a while they'll die down, and then they'll flare up; but I've never had any first-hand experience, so I'm not very well versed on it. It does break loose every once in a while and hits the headlines.

KESICH: Do you remember any specific organizations that really made it big?

STITELY: No. . . really, not other than the authentic military; like the Vets and Legion. Some of the organizations that you read about that were a little to the right or a little to the left have never hit locally like the John Birch and a few different. They have never hit too much locally. If they did, I wasn't familiar with them. Let's put it that way.

KESICH: Do you ever remember any politicians, famous politicians?

STITELY: Yes, I was very close to one who was very prominent. His name was Barr. In fact, his son has been getting the headlines here. Barr was a state senator for forty, fifty years and a very prominent character. There were several; but he's one that I remember that lived here locally and became very, very successful in politics. Outside of that, I can't remember; but Joliet's always been a prominent township and headquarters -- it's always been pretty prominent politically. I know they rely on Joliet, politically, for the hub of the wheel a little bit; and a lot of elections have been decided in this area.

KESICH: Do you remember any elections that were real close? That you

really paid attention to?

STITELY: Ah. . . no, although they've had some heated deals. I just can't remember any borderline cases that any big deal depended on, Alec. I never, as I say, I'd have been the worst politician, I've never been politically inclined. I've voted my share of times, but I've never been closely aligned or never depended on politics. . . . that's the best way to put it, I guess. So consequently, I just never have been the least bit intrigued with politics. I've always done a lot of reading, and I keep pretty close tabs; but I just never have been closely aligned, personally, in politics. My jobs have never depended on any political aspect, so my thought was always *com cí* -- *com ca*. (Laughter)

KESICH: Yes. Hope for the best man.

STITELY: An old saying, "You might as well put the old one back in, because the young one is going to have to learn at your expense." No, I haven't paid too much attention to politics. I've seen a lot of them come, and I've seen a lot of them go; but I would just hate to have my livelihood depend on politics.

KESICH: Do you remember any big changes around here? Specifically, when a different politician came into office?

STITELY: It seems like our biggest change -- biggest economic change -- was when the shopping districts took over, Alec. It just seems they start growing bigger and bigger, of course, as you know; and that has undoubtedly effected the loop business unquestionably. There's always been a controversy of just what to do to maintain any loop. You can't do without; but on the same token, it's been a little difficult to be

progressive. I know they've made numerous surveys, and it's a little question of just what road to take. There's always a question of what's best for any loop situation now, with the trend being for shopping districts on the outskirts. That's about the only real big change, other than the average that every community experiences in their progressive changes. Nothing too worthy of mention possibly. Joliet hasn't suffered too badly -- it's maintained a pretty fair equilibrium on retail business. I think we've maintained a few real good stores in the loop -- such as Kline's and a lot of smaller, individual stores. . . instead of the big stores -- a lot of the smaller stores. So chances are, we've held our own pretty decently.

KESICH: Can you think of anything else?

STITELY: Not too much, Alec. I mean we've covered pretty near every phase of the transition. Of course, I suppose if we had somebody to remind us about various things, it might pop up; but truthfully, I think we've covered pretty much of any importance anyway. Then, of course, another phase has been the traffic problem. That's been a big item. . . and your highways. I mean if you'll think back over the years, there was no highways -- there was no Route 80 -- there was no Route 55. I mean they were all country, double roads. For instance, I've been going back and forth to Hammond for many, many years; and I can recall using a half dozen different routes before they finally got Route 30, then Route 6, and then Route 80. It's just surprising -- we used to spend a half a day sometimes, getting back and forth to Hammond -- now it's a 45-minute situation. So I mean traffic is another big, big problem; and I noticed in our recent trip to Florida, they say that it's been the biggest traffic season in history. More people are hit-

ting the trail, and on our return trip they were pouring in. It was bumper-to-bumper while we were there. On our return trip we noticed that they were pouring in like mad. Naturally, most of them are elderly people. Lots of trailers, lots of campers. We noticed this year a lot of kids -- more so than normal because it's a school part of the year. We noticed children, six, eight, ten, twelve, fourteen years old that must have been taken out of school; because the parents, possibly, were unemployed and using this period as a vacation time. There was even several articles down there -- news articles about how tremendous the traffic and the tourists had been this year -- the greatest in history. There were practically no reservations. Four were always able to pick up an apartment or a room, and we went up and down the strip at Fort Meyers Beach; and I never saw so many "No Vacancy" signs in my life. Then we took Alligator Alley when our reservation ran out at Fort Meyer Beach -- we went over to Fort Lauderdale to visit some friends that had lived in the rear here that we wanted to look up. We completed that deal, and I called a few places where we had stopped previously and also several motels; and the answer was, "No." I suppose if I had gotten a paper and pinned down a run around at looking them up, but I just didn't feel up to it -- so we got on the tollway and started for home after we had gotten our visit out there. I'm kinda glad we had a couple of weeks of enjoyable sunshine. The weather was beautiful down there -- 85, 86, 87 degrees; but to come back here and get cold weather and two or three inches of snow kinda takes the flavor out of the trip, Alec.

KESICH: In the schools, do you remember the drop-out rate?

STITELY: Ah. . . it was very small. In those days, drop-outs were

very small, Alec. I don't know -- I suppose the pro-ratio increased, because eventually population expanded; and there was so many more. In those days there was so many less kids, that that unquestionably accounted for the . . . and then until we started living in a little faster day and age, I suppose. The drop-out rate was very, very -- in fact, it was mild to my . . . all through my eighth grade and on into high school. I can't recall, maybe one or two instances; but I meant very, very mild. It was just unusual. It was a must then. There were pretty strict rules; and it was just a must for schooling then where I think now they might be a little more negligent.

KESICH: When you were in school, did you remember a lot of kids from overseas that their parents had migrated over here?

STITELY: In what respect, Alec?

KESICH: Like speaking a foreign language.

STITELY: No, at that time there was very little transfer, or what you might call changeable -- interchanging. That's something that's become popular in more recent years. In fact, I can't recall of ever having any occasion to know about that in those days. They do it now, but at that time -- it's something that has more or less been in the last decade or two. It's interesting -- it's broadening, I'm sure. We had some neighbors here that went to Europe to study music -- the Babcocks. Oh, I know quite a few different people; but in my younger days it was almost unheard of. I mean people didn't do the amount of travelling. Again, they didn't do the amount of travelling, air-wise, or shop-wise, that they do now. I mean, look at the travel agencies -- you never knew

what the travel agent was in those days. It's just one of those things that's modernized. I suppose the old saying, "Go now, pay later," (Laughter) could have some effect on that, questionably.

KESICH: Well, that's about all I can think of.

STITELY: Well, I think we've done a pretty fair job, Alec.

KESICH: Thank you very much.

STITELY: You bet.

INDEX

A.A.R.P., 23
A & P, 21
airfields, 16
Alabama, 24
Alligator Alley, 28
army, 7, 8
Arsenal, 20
Atlanta, (GA), 7
Aurora, 24
automobile rows, 13
automobile styles, 18

Babcocks, the, 29
Barr, Senator, 25
Beno, Andy, 12
Benos, the, 11
Bertagnoli, Fannie,
 pianist, 13
Birch, John, 25
Block & Kuhl (department
 store), 21, 22
Bluff Street, 14
boat(s), 19
Boston, MA, 17
Boston Store, 21, 22
bridges, 18, 19
Broadway, 14, 19
Brooklyn, 24
butter, 14

campers, 28
Camp Gordon, 7
canal, 18, 19, 20
Carson-Pirie-Scott & Co.,
 department store, 21
Cavanaugh, Eddie, singer,
 13
Central School, 5, 6
Chattanooga, TN, 7
Chicago, IL, 8, 12
Chicago Street, 6, 22, 24
churches, 14
Clinton Street, 14, 21
clothing, retail selling,
 8, 10
clothing trends, 15
concerts, 12
coke plant, 20
Crystal Stairs Theater, 13

dancing, dance, 12
Decatur, MI, 12
Dellwood Park, 12
department stores, 22
depression, 8, 9
Disneyland (FL), 11
Dixon, IL, 5
Door County WI, 11
Dorsey Building, 13
drop-outs, 28, 29
Ducker's, department store, 21, 22
Duncan Hotel, the, 22

E. J. & E. Railroad, 19
Eastern Avenue, 24
Eastern Avenue School, 5, 6
East, (Joliet Township School), 5
Electra, 20
Electric Park, 12
Emco, (Building), 21
Europe, 29

Felman family, 22
F.E. Marsh School, 5
fires, 13, 14
Florida, 11, 17, 27
flying, 16, 17
Ford Essex, 18
Fort Lauderdale, FL, 28
Fort Meyers Beach, FL, 28
Fort Oglethorpe, 7
Freeport, IL, 5
furniture business, (selling),
 8, 10

Gary, IN, 20
Georgia, 25
Goldblatt's, 10
granddaughter, 17
Grand Theater Building, 6
Grant's (W. T.), 21

Hammond, IN 5, 8, 12, 17, 19,
 22, 27
high rises, 14, 23
Hupmobile, 18

Illinois Steel Mill, 20
Imperial, 18

industry, 19, 20
Infantry, Sixth, 7
installment buying, 19

J. T. (high school), 5
Jefferson Street, West, 13
Joliet, 5, 14, 18, 20,
24, 25
Joliet Theater, 13

K-Mart (store), 21
Kline's, department store,
27
Ku Klux Klan, 24

Lansing, IL, 17
Legion, (American), 25
Lincoln Bakery, 14
Lockport, 12
loop, 26, 27
Louis Joliet, Hotel, 22
Luxembourg, 7
Lytton's, 21

marriage, 8
Marshall Field, 8
Michigan, 12
mill(s), 11, 19- 20
Mount Carroll, IL, 6

National (Bank), 21
Neisner's 13
Ninth Street, 9
Nod-N-Prod, 16

Orlando, FL, 11
Orpheum Theater, 21
Ottawa Street, 13, 14, 22
Ottawa Street Church, 14
overall factory, 21

Packard (auto), 18
parents, 5, 20
Patterson Road, 24
Penney's store, 13, 22
politics, 9
Polk Bros. store, 10
prices, 14

railroads, 19
retail business (selling),
7, 8, 20
Reuben's, 13
Rialto Theater, 13

roads, 16
roller skating rink, 12, 13
Route 6, 27
Route 55, 27
Route 80, 27

school, 5, 7, 28
Sears, 13, 22
senior citizen(s), 14, 23
service, military, 5, 7, 8
shoes, selling, 7, 8
Silver Staircase, 14
Sixteenth Street, 19
son, 17
streetcars, 14
Studebaker (auto), 18
Sweet, Howard, orchestra, 12

tailoring business, 8
Texas, 7
theaters, 12, 13
time-pay plans, 9
Topp's, 21
trailers, 28
travel agencies, 29, 30

Union Station, 19

Vets, (V. F. W.) 25

wallpaper plants, 20
Walgreen's 13
Wards, Montgomery, 22
Washington, D. C. 9, 24
Webster Street, 6, 21
West (J.T.), 5
White Store, 21
wife, 11, 12
Wisconsin, 12
Woodruff Hotel, 22
Woolworth, 6, 13
World War II, 10

JOLIET JUNIOR COLLEGE LIBRARY
JOLIET, ILLINOIS

